

# How to be an Ally to people experiencing Homelessness

## Be a good neighbor. Introduce yourself!

Ask what their name is, how their day is going, or comment on the weather, like you would with your other neighbors. Build up to having more meaningful interactions. Ask how you can be of assistance. Here are some common needs:



**Hygiene:** Offer access to water for drinking, hand washing, and bathing. Share a list of bathrooms: [sfpublicworks.org/pitstop](http://sfpublicworks.org/pitstop)



**Trash:** Let them know the street cleaning day. Ask if they need extra trash bags. Trash can be left on the curb and will usually get picked up by the leading truck.



**Substance use:** Visit [harmreduction.org](http://harmreduction.org) to learn about available resources. Treatment can be accessed in-person at *1380 Howard Street*.



**Charging:** Offer a power source for charging phones and other devices.



**Mail:** When trust is built, consider offering them your mailing address for their important mail. It is crucial to set boundaries and clarify expectations.

**Psychiatric crisis?** Check in with them before calling Mobile Crisis at (415) 970-4000

**Medical emergency?** Call 911. Make it clear that this is a medical emergency and not a police emergency.

**Medically compromised** but don't need an ambulance? Call street medicine: (828) 217-5800

**Interpersonal conflict?** Call your neighborhood Community Ambassadors, listed at: [sfcap.org](http://sfcap.org)

**Unhoused people in need of shelter** or other services can show up by 6pm at Mission Action to see if they have a bed: 1050 South Van Ness

## Advocate for real solutions.

**Call** your Supervisor and the Mayor's office and pressure them to open more "Pit-Stop" bathrooms, hotel rooms, safe campsites, and permanent affordable housing.

**Organize** neighbors to provide mutual aid. Reach out to groups such as Cole Valley Haight Allies or Rad Mission Neighbors. Host a speaker to talk about real solutions! The Coalition on Homelessness can help.

**Educate** yourself! Read the Street Sheet and make sure you know the basic facts: Most homeless people were San Franciscans before they lost their housing, and the reason we have mass homelessness is that rents have increased while naturally occurring low income housing has disappeared, and the city hasn't prioritized budget dollars to fill that gap.

## Things not to do:

**Do not** call the police on people who aren't causing or threatening violence. Thousands of homeless people end up cited and incarcerated every year for simply sleeping, and several unhoused people have been shot by police in the last decade. Police contact can prolong a person's homelessness.

**Do not** call 311 to sweep away people experiencing homelessness. People who are working towards getting housed need to start over when their belongings are thrown away. You can call 311 to help with trash pickup, illegal dumping, or a blocked doorway, if you can't sort it out with your homeless neighbors.

## Support outreach organizations:

The Coalition on Homelessness, North Beach Citizens, Homeless Youth Alliance, Dolores Street Community Services, Night Ministry, Faithful Fools, Project Homeless Connect, Glide, Youth With A Mission, Larkin Street Youth Services, Homeless Prenatal

For more information, visit The Coalition on Homelessness at:

[COHSF.org](http://COHSF.org)

